

The Sheltered Workshop Update



Dept. of Elem. & Sec. Education, Division of Special Education

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NEWS FROM THE TRENCHES

This is the quiet time of year in Jefferson City. The hectic activities of the past fiscal year end are over and the legislature is not in session. This is a good time to get around and see some of the shops and catch up on what is going on around the state. I recently visited St. Louis, and southeast Missouri. Managers report that they are indeed busy but the pace is not hectic. Indications are that the economy is in the process of reviving and that business as a whole will continue to improve.

As I make my visits around I am continually impressed and surprised at the innovations and expansion I see in many of the shops.

Mary Piazza managed ITE, Inc. for nearly twenty years, prior to taking that position she worked for St. Louis ARC. Mary's life had been dedicated to helping people less fortunate. She was particularly conscious of the needs of people with most severe problems. ITE under Mary's leadership employed people who had failed in other shops, or could not find employment anywhere else. Mary was spirited and dedicated and worked very hard to make ITE a success. Mary passed away on September 25 after a long battle with diabetes and heart trouble. Mary touched a lot of lives and will be sorely missed by all of us.

Boone Center, St. Charles (Chuck Blossom, Manager) has purchased some new equipment that allows them to provide some intricate labeling and security devices for DVD packages. This will allow them to competitively work in this market.

Valley Industries, Hazelwood (Steve Frank, Manager) has completed the move into their new facilities and they are very nice. This new

THE BUSINESS INCUBATOR CONCEPT

Workshops can offer a tremendous asset to a local business environment. Every community has new entrepreneurs with ideas and a desire to start a business of their own. The workshop in any given community can offer some excellent service and advice to a start-up business. Contact local economic development people and make sure they are aware of the services you can provide for a new business, or businesses just moving into town. If you have a college in your community you might check to see what

they are doing to assist business development. I know in Springfield that Southwest Missouri State University has the Center for Business and Economic Development that includes, the Small Business Development Center, and the Wal-Mart Innovation Network. Make sure these resources are well aware of your capabilities. Several people with good ideas were referred to Springfield Workshop. People with new products were sent to us for packaging assistance. SWI has the capability of bagging, shrink wrapping, skin packaging, and blister packaging. The pros and cons of each system would be discussed with the customer and they would be put in contact with a company that could help them design the cards, headers, etc. that might be needed for the type of packaging decided upon.



Not only can you offer expert advice on packaging, but many of you can offer warehousing and a ready, willing and reliable workforce. The workshop can be a real asset to the community in developing new business efforts and providing a foothold for new start-up businesses.

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facility is large, clean, and bright. It provides a very nice work environment for the employees. This facility took the place of two different locations. Once all of the transportation bugs were worked out all went smoothly.

Doco Inc., Ava (Margaret Percy, Manager) is in the process of remodeling a facility that they recently purchased from Hagale Industries. This is a nice, open 20,000 sq ft facility that will be a tremendous improvement over their old plant.

Industrial Aid, St. Louis (Mark Caputo, Manager) is providing a valuable service to one of their customers. I had an opportunity to talk with the customer when I visited and he was extremely pleased and enthusiastic about the services provided him. This individual sells to retail hobby centers around the country. He contracts with Industrial Aid to do all of the work relating to his product and customer orders, including, receiving, shipping, packaging, warehousing, inventory, etc. This frees the customer up to do what he does best – sell. It eliminates a lot of fixed costs for the customer. Even though he does pay a fixed fee to Industrial Aid each month and then pays by quantities shipped, he figures it is less expensive for him to do this than to go out and rent or buy a facility, hire staff and workers, pay utilities, and insurance, etc. This customer is very pleased with his partnership with Industrial Aid.

Jeffco Subcontracting, Arnold (Harry Wood, Manager) is currently taking quotes for a large expansion of their warehouse. Their business has been very good, and this new addition will provide more docks and improved material handling capabilities. With improved flow of work they hope to provide more employment in Jefferson County for people with disabilities.

Enhancements, Potosi (Annette Portell, Manager) has purchased a going business concern, including all equipment, inventory, and customer list. This is a plaque and laminating business that has done well over the past few years. They have leased an additional location just for this business and it is currently keeping them very busy.

Perry County Sheltered Workshop, Perryville (Bill Tweedy, Manager) is in the process of expanding their production space into what was once warehouse and they are installing a machine that manufactures large plastic bags. They have a source for the bags and are very close to beginning production.

Specialty Industries, St Joseph (Gloria Thomas, Manager) has received an award from St Joseph Packaging as their 'vendor of the year'. They are also in the process of adding 20,000 square feet and six docks to their facilities, which will bring them up to 60,000 square feet.

Cape Girardeau Sheltered Workshop, Cape (Hilary Schmittzehe, Manager) is in the process of developing and marketing a product line. As with any new product there are inherent risks and costs involved in getting it into the distribution phase. This product is in the child toy market and it should have a lot of potential.

Pemiscott Progressive Industries, Hayti, (Martha Stevens, Manager) is in the process of obtaining bids on a new warehouse building, due to the fire that occurred in August. The new building will be steel construction, and should be completed in November.

Stoddard County Sheltered Workshop, Dexter, (Jim LaBrot, Manager) is in the process of adding a new warehouse addition to their facility. This addition will provide badly needed space for the processing of recyclables and storage of items ready to ship.

SEE, Inc., Piedmont, (June Cole, Manager) is currently looking at options for expansion. This may be accomplished by purchasing an existing building or constructing a new building. The county tax levy in Wayne County had been reduced a few years ago. June, along with some workshop board members, and county board members was successful in convincing the county commissioners into increasing the levy back to the maximum allowed in anticipation of the building needs for the workshop.

I was really impressed to see the new 20,000 square foot addition at **Current River Sheltered Workshop**, Doniphan, (David Peters, Manager). It changed the appearance so much, nearly tripling the size, that I actually missed it the first time through, and had to turn around and come back. This was a tremendous improvement for this shop, and it provides the employees with an excellent climate controlled environment.

Congratulations to all these shops and others I may have missed for their effort to improve the working environment and employment opportunities for people with disabilities.



COOPERATIVE SCHOOL TO WORK PROGRAM

Dr. Stephen Barr, Assistant Commissioner for Special Education, and I visited some shops up in northwest Missouri this past month. I thought it would warrant sharing something with you about what some of the shops in this area are doing regarding the school to work cooperative program. Some of the shops we visited noted that they were involved in the cooperative school to work program. They are making a significant effort to make the local school district special education instructors aware of what the workshop is all about. They are doing this by, not only inviting special education teachers out to the workshop to visit, but also getting them involved in the production process for a day or two. This is an excellent way for the teachers to get really involved in what opportunities are available for their students. It will assist the teachers in recognizing what they need to focus on in teaching their students. This type of activity helps to not only make teachers aware of what the workshops are all about, but it may also provide you with a resource to help improve opportunities for your employees, by taking input from the teachers that come out to work. Obviously summer-time is the best time to try to schedule this type of activity, or other times when the teachers in surrounding districts might have a break. I think it is imperative that shops develop relations with their local school districts to assist them in providing evaluation, training, and possibly employment for some of their students with special needs. If you have not made some significant efforts to contact and work with the special education staff in surrounding school districts I would urge you to do so. These efforts, by schools and workshops to cooperate, will hopefully help a number of students make a smoother transition from school to work.

If you have a state school near your shop, I would urge you to make the same efforts to work with the staff at that facility, to help them to also provide transition for their students.

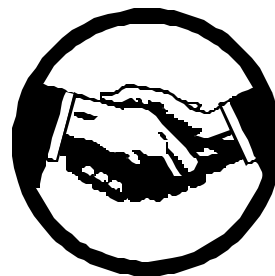
If you have questions regarding the cooperative program please don't hesitate to call or email me with those questions.



SHARING OF WORK

A few years ago there was a lot of reluctance by workshop managers to share work. This has changed in recent years. One of the main reasons for this change may have been necessity. During the last eight or nine years of robust economic activity, many shops found they had a tough time meeting the demands of their customers. Thus, many sought help from neighboring shops to meet those customer demands. This has worked well. Managers have found that they actually can trust their fellow managers to not infringe on their customer base. They have found the quality control procedures in all shops have improved as well. This has been a result, partly, of the increased work activity and customer demand and expectations, but also of the maturity and skill levels of the new management teams that are operating in workshops today. Workshops have become more professional and business like as they mature, and this in turn has created an atmosphere of trust and mutual respect among managers and management teams.

There are many shops that are sharing work currently, and this becomes even more important as the economy has slowed and work has been harder for some shops to find. Ralph Smith at Helping Hand of Goodwill shares work with eight other shops in western Missouri. Martha Stevens at PPI shares work with five other shops in southeast Missouri. The shops here in central Missouri are constantly working with each other to complete jobs and share work. In the Lake of the Ozarks area, Bill Barr at LAI shares work with a number of neighboring shops. The shops in St. Louis consistently share work, and if a job comes along that a shop does not feel suited for they refer that customer to a neighboring shop. You are to be commended on the fine jobs you do in working together and helping each other out. The really important thing about sharing work is that it continues to keep employees productive and busy even during slowdowns. Generally, there are some shops in geographic areas that have work when others may not.



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Here are some things to remember when another shop asks you to help them out.

- ?!!!!Be honest with the other shop as to whether you can meet the production requirements.
- ?!!!!Remember the shop providing you with the work is a customer too, the same as any of your other customers.
- ?!!!!Remember that the quality of your work not only reflects on your shop, but on the shop that is providing you with the work, so do it right.
- ?!!!!Remember to communicate with the supplying shop as to the quality and quantity requirements. Don't leave anything to guess.
- ?!!!!Remember to return the favor of sharing work even if it isn't the shop that shared with you.

Workshops here in Missouri have done some tremendous things by working together, look at the legislative efforts in getting the per diem increased. Keep that in mind, and let's continue to work together to keep people with disabilities employed throughout the state.

SELLING THE INTANGIBLE

What can be done to increase sales? Sales are the lifeblood of business. All businesses sell.

How do you sell a service vs. a product?

It's a challenge that takes a strong belief in the invisible and a specific four-point strategy for creating perceived value:

Show exciting visuals. Say you produce fashion shows for nonprofit fundraising events. Your brochure, Web site and presentation portfolio should include photographs from past events that display the models, the room set-up, and the sponsor banners and booths. Always carry a camera so you can include the most up-to-the-minute documentation of your work. As your budget builds, include video clips. Be sure to download the footage to your Web site. Your job is to constantly think of ways to show your future customers how your service is being experienced in the real world right now.

Seduce customers with free trial offers and money-back guarantees.

New business owners have to practice acts of generosity. Use the word "free" in your advertising. Whether you own a car wash or a massage-therapy business, each week give away your services to a certain percentage of customers. It's good public relations, and it helps develop your good name. Money-back guarantees should be company policy, too. It's smart to include a deadline date in the guarantee. Otherwise, some folks could abuse your offer by trying to insist on a refund months after the service was rendered.

Ease your way in with endorsements. Endorsements, you can never be reminded enough of their value. It's especially important that a satisfied customer—or two—talk to a prospect investing in a service yet to be experienced. For example, if you have a catering business, your prospect has no proof you can supply him or her with first class, crowd-pleasing menus, a unique presentation of food or a high-caliber team of servers. At this point, it's all talk and no action. But when you add past customer endorsements into the equation, your believability improves dramatically because your past customers are the proof. They witnessed and paid for a successful event. Here are people who have experienced your ultimate service *and* are willing to stick their neck out for you. The endorsements themselves give your company tangible credibility.

Ask for input. The great thing about selling the invisible? It has the ability to change and grow on the spot. Today's car-detailing job can be better executed than yesterday's work was. But these lessons can only be learned if business owners are willing to ask, "What are we doing right?" and "What needs to be improved?" Then you must put those changes into effect immediately. If you make a habit of thinking and acting like a perpetual student, your service will constantly improve. Then what used to be considered invisible will truly come to life and stand out in any crowd.

This article was taken from Entrepreneur Magazine on line - <http://www.entrepreneurmag.com/>



10 TACTICS TO BOOST MORALE

One of a manager's most important jobs is to keep spirits up in the workplace. With stress levels in Corporate America at an all-time high, this isn't always easy to do. However, there are some strategies you can use that will get the job done – without hurting your budget.

1. Sponsor a 'Noon Movie' – Once a week (depending on employee schedules), set up a VCR in the lunch-room and show a funny movie during lunch. If time is limited, show reruns of 'Seinfeld', 'Frasier', or other situation comedies.
2. Set up a 'Humor Corner' – Designate one section of the office as the place for humor and encourage employees to post cartoons, jokes, or other funny material.
3. Get out of the office – Whenever possible, hold meetings outside the office – at the coffee shop down the street or at a local restaurant. If weather permits, don't be afraid to hold meetings outside from time to time.
4. Sponsor an 'Interesting Pizza Day' – Once a month treat employees to pizza (gourmet pizza shops now feature dozens of specialty toppings) and encourage people to try different kinds. Not only is it a free lunch, but it's lots of fun.
5. Liven up your memos – Buy a book of one-liners, and include a joke at the bottom of your memos.
6. Run a 'Guess the Baby' contest – Ask the staff to bring in baby photos and post them on the wall. Award a free lunch to the employees who can guess who's who.
7. Have "Late Day Mondays" – If possible, once a month allow your employees to arrive an hour late on a Monday morning – or leave an hour early on a Friday.
8. Take pictures – Every office has an aspiring photographer. Ask that person to take candid shots of employees, and add them to the 'Humor Corner'.
9. Play with the dress code – If your culture allows it, hold an 'Ugly Tie', 'Ugly Pants', or 'Ugly Sweater', day. Award prizes for the winners.
10. Bring your smile to work – You'll be surprised at the difference it makes. If the manager consistently has an upbeat attitude, the staff will as well.

Taken from 'The Manager's Intelligence Report' sent in by Annette Portell



"To laugh often and much; to win the respect of intelligent people and the affection of children; to earn the appreciation of honest critics and endure the betrayal of false friends; to appreciate beauty, to find the best in others; to leave the world a little better; whether by a healthy child, a garden patch or a redeemed social condition; to know even one life has breathed easier because you have lived. This is the meaning of success." -

Ralph Waldo Emerson